DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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4130

QUESTION

Did the US Government take into account the AWACS "multiplier effect" when approval was given to the enhancement of the F-15?

RESPONSE

The AWACS "multiplier effect" will improve the effectiveness of all Saudi aircraft, not just the enhanced F-15. Saudi Arabia is a relatively large geographical area, approximately the size of the United States east of the Mississippi, with widely scattered population centers, military installations, and economic facilities. AWACS aircraft would greatly enhance the RSAF's ability to defend Saudi air space with the relatively limited number of fighter aircraft available (approximately 150 F-5 AND F-15 aircraft) to cover such a large geographical area. The AWACS permits the detection of threat aircraft at a sufficient range to permit intercept well prior to the target area. The F-15, even without the enhancements, has an excellent air intercept radar that would benefit from AWACS employment principally in early warning and defensive intercept control by maximizing its own airborne intercept search volume. AWACS aircraft would be of even greater benefit in directing Saudi F-5 aircraft to intruders beyond the range of the F-5's more limited airborne intercept radar.